

Love

Agape: Christlike Affection

Definition: Agape is the Spirit-wrought affection of the redeemed heart, patterned after Christ, by which a believer delights in God, submits to the Father, and seeks the true good of others as image-bearers of God, even at personal cost.

Growth Pattern

In the Christian life, love often begins as conviction, blossoms into desire, forms into costly obedience, and ripens into a settled pattern of self-giving service.

Growth factors	Dangers to watch
Stage 1: Grafted - Conviction I see my lovelessness, selfishness, and need for Christ to change me.	Danger 1: Grafted - Conviction Discouragement, presumption, or trying to manufacture love by the flesh.
Stage 2: Flowering - Desire I begin wanting to love God and neighbor rightly, and I am grieved by selfishness.	Danger 2: Flowering - Desire Mistaking warm feelings, good intentions, or public niceness for Christlike love.
Stage 3: Early Fruit - Costly Obedience I apologize, forgive, serve, and seek another's true good even when inconvenient.	Danger 3: Early Fruit - Costly Obedience Resentment, people-pleasing, or loving only when the other person responds well.
Stage 4: Ripe Fruit - Settled Service I increasingly delight in God, obey the Father, and honor others as image-bearers at real cost.	Danger 4: Ripe Fruit - Settled Service Pride, burnout from not abiding, or impatience with immature fruit in others.

Self-analysis:

Where do I see this fruit beginning or growing?

Where do I need to repent and abide in Christ?

What danger at this stage do I need to watch?

Who may need to taste this fruit from me?

One act of obedience or prayer this week:

John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.